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The Letter in PDF format

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The European Union and its model to regulate international trade relations

Author: Alan Hervé



The rules-based multilateral trading system that Europe has enjoyed in recent decades is being weakened, giving way to an unpredictable regime dominated by power logics and a sustained resurgence of international economic tensions. If the Union wants to defend a more balanced vision of globalisation, it must pursue a more ambitious policy.

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Foundation :

Covid-19: European responses, a full picture



Faced with the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the Union is trying to deploy the various means at its disposal. In order to react and show resilience for the future, its capacity to act depends largely on the Member States and their resolve to act together. The Foundation offers you a summary of all the measures taken at national and European level, which we update regularly... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Call for tender for the European Defence Fund



On 6 April the Commission announced the opening of calls for tender for projects under the European Defence Fund for the year 2020. The total budget is €160 million, made available from two funds, the EDIDP and the PADR. The projects are to cover areas such as research into medical defences against biological attacks or drones... [Read more](#)

Coronavirus :

Agreement on a rescue plan of 540 billion €



Finance Ministers meeting in Eurogroup on 9 April agreed on a €540 billion rescue plan to deal with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. A credit line of €240 billion will be available to all Member States through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) for health expenditure. The European Investment Bank (EIB) will provide up to €200 billion in liquidity guarantees for businesses. The Commission will guarantee up to €100 billion for national temporary unemployment schemes. Ministers finally agreed on the principle of a common recovery plan in the coming months... [Read more](#)

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Recommendations regarding the use of mobile applications



On 8 April, the Commission issued its recommendations on the use of data and applications in response to the coronavirus pandemic and stressed the need for a common European approach. It considered that digital tools could play an important role in the gradual lifting of containment measures, while at the same time underlining the importance of the principles of data security and respect for fundamental rights. Mobile applications could be a social distancing tool to alert, prevent and search for contacts, while the use of anonymised mobile location data could be used to model the future evolution of the virus... [Read more](#)

Exceptional measures must be in line with fundamental values



On 6 April, Justice Ministers discussed the consequences of the coronavirus on the European judicial and penitentiary systems. They exchanged views on the measures put in place in each country and agreed that extraordinary measures must remain compatible with the fundamental values of the Union... [Read more](#)

10 actions towards research and innovation



Research Ministers discussed a joint response to the coronavirus on April 7. They stressed the importance of information sharing and research funding, and agreed on priority actions for Covid-19-related research and innovation... [Read more](#)

Measures to support the economy



The French government's plan to support the economy will be stepped up to €100 billion. The announcement is to be made on 15 April. Belgium announced new measures on 11 April, such as a temporary moratorium on business bankruptcies and a freeze on the degressivity of unemployment benefits. On 10 April, the Spanish government activated the second €20 billion tranche of the €100 billion business guarantee line decided by the government on 17 March. On 8 April in Poland, the government launched a "financial shield" of 100 billion zloty (€21.9 billion) for businesses, bringing the total amount of measures to deal with the consequences of the pandemic to 300 billion zloty (€65.75 billion). On 6 April, the German government introduced a state-guaranteed rapid loan scheme for SMEs... [Read more](#)

National Measures



Containment has been extended in France until 11 May, the French President announced on 13 April. In Germany, where the restrictions will remain in place until 19 April, the National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina published its recommendations for a gradual lifting of the measures on 13 April. In Austria, public gardens, shops of less than 400 m², garden centres and DIY stores reopened on 14 April, and the wearing of masks is mandatory as a condition for going out. In Spain, where the restrictions are in place until 26 April, some activities resumed on 13 April. In Ireland, containment is in place until 5 May. In the United Kingdom, where the population is confined until an unspecified date, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was released from hospital on 12 April. In Poland, movement restrictions are in place until 19 April and school closures until 26 April... [Read more](#)

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Italy: extension of confinement until 3rd May

The President of the Italian Council, Giuseppe Conte, decided on 10



April to extend the confinement of the population until 3 May. Nevertheless, bookshops and clothing stores are allowed to reopen from 14 April, and logging can resume... [Read more](#)

Restrictions on access to the Schengen area to be maintained until 15 May



On 8 April the Commission recommended the renewal of the ban on non-essential travel within the Schengen area. The European Centre for Disease Prevention considers that the evolution of the number of infections and the high risk of overloading Member States' health systems do not allow a return to normal at this level. The Commission proposes that this ban be maintained at least until 15 May... [Read more](#)

Defence forces' contribution to the pandemic



On 6 April, defence ministers discussed how their armies have intervened in support of national health systems. They agreed to establish a Task Force to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices on these deployments, complementing NATO's own arrangements. With regard to European missions abroad, the ministers decided to maintain a presence in fragile countries... [Read more](#)

Support for cultural actors



On 8 April, the Ministers of Culture discussed the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on the culture and media sector. They stressed the crucial role of the press in the fight against misinformation and welcomed the measures already taken by the Commission... [Read more](#)

Budget 2020 Modifications



On 14 April, the Council adopted two proposals amending the EU budget for 2020 so as to free up funds in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Funds are also being made available to help Greece deal with increased migration pressures. Commitments have been increased overall by €3.57 billion to €172.2 billion. Payments were increased by €1.6 billion to a total of €155.2 billion. The money will be used to finance medical supplies, to build field hospitals and to transfer patients for treatment in other Member States... [Read more](#)

International aid plan of 20 billion €



On 8 April the Council validated the international aid plan presented by the Commission. This plan of more than €20 billion will help the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Union's neighbourhood to combat the virus. In particular, it will finance their health systems and plans to support their economies. The plan will involve European institutions, their financial institutions and Member States... [Read more](#)

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IMF priorities for the world economy



On April 9, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva called the coronavirus crisis "the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression" of 1929. She outlined four priorities for the IMF: maintaining confinement and support measures for health systems, protecting people and businesses with broad fiscal measures, protecting the financial sector and putting in place an economic recovery plan. She noted that the IMF has a lending capacity of \$1 trillion and can increase its emergency assistance capacity to \$100 billion... [Read more](#)

Sharp drop in international trade



The World Trade Organization (WTO) estimated on 8 April that world trade will fall by 13% to 32% in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It also foresees economic recovery scenarios in 2021, the most optimistic of which is a return to the status quo preceding the health crisis... [Read more](#)

Council :

The Council adopts the mobility package



On 7 April, the Council adopted the mobility package governing the posting of lorry drivers, maximum working hours, minimum rest periods and control and cabotage requirements. The text now has to be approved by the Parliament... [Read more](#)

Redrafting of the Regulation on compliance with international trade rules



On 8 April the Council adopted a position on the amendment of a regulation on the implementation and enforcement of international trade rules by the Union. It allows negotiations with the European Parliament to begin. A qualified majority is required for adoption by the Council, in agreement with the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

Agreement on new agricultural irrigation rules



On 7 April, the Council adopted new measures to reduce the risk of shortages of water used to irrigate crops. The use of reclaimed water should thus be facilitated, in order to cope with climate change, particularly heat waves and droughts. The text must now be adopted by Parliament... [Read more](#)

Agreement on freight information digitisation



On 7 April the Council adopted a draft regulation which will enable freight transport operators to provide their information digitally to the authorities more easily. All public authorities will be obliged to accept this information in both digital and paper format, which should increase the efficiency and sustainability of the sector. The text still awaits adoption by Parliament at second reading... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Extension of European mission in Iraq



On 7 April the Council extended the mandate of the EUAM/Iraq Advisory Mission until 30 April 2022. EUAM's mandate is to advise the Iraqi authorities on the reform of the civilian branch of the security sector. For this new mandate, the EUAM will set up a project identification and implementation cell to coordinate its action and that of the Member States operating in Iraq... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Judgment for the suspension of the Disciplinary Court in Poland



On 8 April the Court of Justice demanded the suspension of the Disciplinary Court set up in Poland until it could rule on the Court's compatibility with Union law. The Commission had referred the matter to the Court of Justice for interim measures, alleging that the new Polish court was biased and that the judges were in danger of being punished if they did not rule as the Polish Government would have liked. As long as the Court is not suspended, Poland will have to pay a penalty fee... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Arrest of individual suspected of coronavirus-related fraud



On 6 April, Europol announced the arrest of a man in Singapore on suspicion of money laundering linked to a coronavirus scam. The man is alleged to have impersonated a company in order to promote the rapid delivery of FFP2 masks and hand disinfectants. It was the French police who contacted Europol after a French pharmaceutical company was defrauded of €6.64 million... [Read more](#)

Risk of drug shortages

While waiting for a vaccine against the new coronavirus, some medicines used to treat the symptoms of the disease may soon be in short supply in Europe. The continued availability of medicines,



especially those used for patients with Covid-19, is a major concern, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), based in Amsterdam, said on 6 April... [Read more](#)

Poland :

New Deputy Prime Minister



Development Minister Jadwiga Emilewicz was appointed Deputy Prime Minister on 9 April. She replaces Jarosław Gowin, who resigned on 6 April because of his disagreement with the government over whether to maintain the presidential election, scheduled for 10 May, despite the Covid-19 pandemic... [Read more](#)

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Vatican :

Urbi et Orbi Message



In his message "Urbi et orbi" on 12 April, Pope Francis addressed Europe, the continent that managed to recover after the Second World War by relying on unity. The Pope called for European unity, for countries to help each other. He concluded by saying that if Europe recovered from this crisis, then the world will recover... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Guidelines on the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law



On 8 April, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, published a toolkit for all European governments on the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law during the COVID-19 crisis... [Read more](#)

Guidelines on algorithms



On 8 April, the Council of Europe published its guidelines on the use of algorithms, which have become increasingly popular but which pose a threat to individual freedoms. It recommends that appropriate legislation be put in place in all Member States, and that these rules should guarantee the transparency of the code, human control of algorithm operations and respect for privacy... [Read more](#)

Report on the Greek prison system



On 9 April, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) called upon Greece to take measures to prevent persistent ill-treatment of prisoners, prison overcrowding and staff shortages. In its report, it further requested that "all police officers in the country clearly understand that any form of ill-treatment of arrested persons constitutes a criminal offence"... [Read more](#)

European incarceration rate stable in 2019



The rate of incarceration on the European continent has remained stable between 2018 and 2019, but in 10 countries overcrowding in prisons remains "particularly severe", according to a Council of Europe study published on 7 April, which included data from 45 out of 52 prison administrations in the 47 member countries of the Council of Europe and which provided the data... [Read more](#)

UN :

Heavy job losses expected

The labour market is facing its " most serious crisis since the Second World War " due to the coronavirus pandemic. 1.25 billion people are at high risk of dismissal or salary cuts, according to the International



Labour Organization (ILO). According to a study published on 7 April, the UN agency estimates that the novel coronavirus pandemic is expected to wipe out 6.7% of the world's working hours in the second quarter of 2020 alone, or 195 million full-time equivalents (for a 48-hour working week)... [Read more](#)

Investing in nursing staff



In its annual report on the state of the world's nursing staff published on 7 April, the WHO highlights the shortage of nurses in Europe and calls for their numbers to be increased. Noting that there are only 79 nurses per 10 000 people in Europe, WHO encourages Europe to monitor their mobility, improve their working conditions and strengthen their capacity to intervene in primary health care. In addition, noting that only 25% of nurses are in senior positions, it recommends the establishment of policies promoting gender equality... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Trade surplus



On 8 April Eurostat announced that the trade balance of the 27 Member States of the Union recorded a surplus of €90.9 billion for the fourth quarter of 2019. The surplus on the trade balance in services amounted to €12.1 billion. The Union's three main partners are the United States, Switzerland and the United Kingdom... [Read more](#)

Publications :

Advocating a true reform of the EU's enlargement process



While the natural place of the Western Balkan States in the European Union should not be questioned, there is a need for thorough assessment of the way the enlargement process has been conducted so far, writes Andi Mustafaj in the Foundation's "Open Horizons" collection... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Miro at home



The Joan Miró Foundation, in Barcelona, is launching the "Miró at Home" programme, offering an opportunity to discover both the artist's works and personality. It also offers games designed for the whole family, and literary readings... [Read more](#)

Bach Museum in Leipzig



The museum devoted to Johann Sebastian Bach in Leipzig, the city where the German composer died, provides virtual access to his permanent exhibition of objects, instruments and scores... [Read more](#)

Virtual visit of Wawel cathedral and castle



The Wawel Hill in Krakow once was the centre of power in Poland. The Cathedral, where kings, heroes and poets are buried, and where Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, celebrated his first mass in 1946, can be visited virtually, even with the sound of the bell. The castle near the cathedral, which is on UNESCO's World Heritage List, can also be visited in 3D... [Read more](#)

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A series at the heart of the European Parliament

The series Parliament, a Franco-German-Belgian production, tells the adventures of a Frenchman who has just arrived in the European Parliament to be an assistant to a Member of Parliament in the form of



a political comedy. The 10 episodes can be seen on the France Télévisions website... [Read more](#)

Virtual visit of Stonehenge



The English Heritage site offers an interactive virtual tour of the 3,000-year-old Stonehenge site. Visitors will also be able to observe the movement and alignment of the planets above the site... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



14th April

Conference of Education Ministers



15th April

Conference of Health Ministers

Conference of NATO Defence Ministers



16th April

Conference of Trade Ministers

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